**Expansion of Rural Telecom Network**

1572. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to expand rural telecome network during the Tenth Five Year Plan period;

(b) if so, the programmes drawn up in this regard;

(c) the target set therefor; and

(d) the circle-wise details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The programme drawn up for expansion of rural telephony is given below:

(i) Affordable & effective communication facilities to all citizens.

(ii) Provision of universal service to all uncovered areas including rural areas.

(iii) Encouragement to development of telecom in rural areas making it more affordable by suitable tariff structure & making provision of rural communications mandatory for all fixed service providers.

(iv) Achieve telecome coverage of all villages in the country and provide reliable media to all the exchanges in rural areas.

(c) The specific targets indicated for the rural areas are:

(i) Increase rural tele-density from the level of 1% to 3% by March, 2007 and to provide reliable transmission media in all rural exchanges by the year 2003.

(ii) Achieve telecom coverage of all villages in the country by the year 2003.

(iii) Areas of North East, Jammu and Kashmir and other hilly regions tribal blocks, etc. to be identified as special thrust areas for accelerated development of telecommunications.

(d) During theTenth Five Year Plan the targets set by BSNL for providing telecom facility in rural areas during 2002-03 are 9.4 lakhs and during 2003-04 are 8.61 lakhs tentatively. The circle wise details are set annually and the target for 2003-04 is given in the Statement.

***Statement***

*Circle wise details regarding expansion of rural telecom network by BSNL annually and the target for 2003-04*

| SI. No. | Circle | Tentaive Target for 2003-04 for Rural Areas |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1 | Andaman and Nicobar | |
| 2 | Andhra Pradesh | 15000 |
| 3 | Assam | 20000 |
| 4 | Bihar | 60000 |
| 5 | Chhattisgarh | 10000 |
| 6 | Gujarat | 27000 |
| 7 | Himachal Pradesh | 19000 |
| 8 | Haryana | 43000 |
| 9 | Jammu and Kashmir | 15000 |
| 10 | Jharkhand | 24000 |
| 11 | Kerala | 106000 |
| 12 | Karnataka | 48000 |
| 13 | Maharashtra | 71000 |
| 14 | Madhya Pradesh | 29000 |
| 15 | North East-I | 7500 |
| 16 | North East-11 | 11500 |
| 17 | Orissa | 25000 |

| 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| 18 | Punjab | 38000 |
| 19 | Rajasthan | 54000 |
| 20 | Tamil Nadu | 38000 |
| 21 | Uttaranchal | 10000 |
| 22 | Uttar Pradesh (East) | 54000 |
| 23 | Uttar Pradesh (West) | 50000 |
| 24 | West Bengal | 85000 |
| 25 | Kolkata | 0 |
| 26 | Chennai | 0 |
| | TOTAL | 861000 |

**Access to Computers**

1573. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the majority of people do not have access to computers;

(b) whether it is also a fact that computers are too high priced to reach the middle classes;

(c) whether any effort is being made to ensure that the prices of computers are contained within the reach of a majority of the people; and

(d) the details of the steps Government have taken for availability of computers at lower prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI S.U.THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) and (b) Yes Sir.

(c) In order to bring the benefits of Information Technology to larger cross section of people, the policy, procedure and tariff framework, is continuously reviewed.